

Mistaken Identity? by Kiku_Takamoto

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Summary:

Billy and Steve were returning one night from a concert, but they never made it home that night. Instead they found themselves in the hospital after being brutally attacked for being suspected of being gay. Their attackers are not who anyone expects.

WARNING:

Story deals with topics of hate crimes, police brutality, beatings, unfair justice systems and homophobia.

Mistaken Identity?

Author's Note:

- I made Billy and Steve the same grade for this story

-Billy is living with Hopper and Jane

“Its almost time for school and neither Billy nor Steve are back!”

Like any Monday morning it was chaos to get everyone to school on time. Ever since Billy turned 18, he had crash at Hopper's cabin till he could afford his own place since Steve's parents wouldn't allow him to live with Steve in his house as 'freeloader'. Hopper allowed Billy to stay for a couple of reason, one his daughter like him and that alone was enough for Hopper to build some trust in Billy, two, Billy was a more reliable picker-upper then Hopper when it come to school rounds and three, Steve. If Steve of all people could forgive Billy after their brawl at Joyce's house, then Hopper saw no reason why he couldn't give Billy a second (or fifth) chance.

It was now Monday morning in the cabin and neither boy had been seen since yesterday afternoon for their concert in Indianapolis. Steve had called and said they would be home by now, but he had yet to show up. Now Hopper was seriously wondering if he was too quick to trust Billy.

“Joyce, they were at a concern last night. They probably got tired from the long drive back and checked into a motel, ” Hopper reasoned. This did nothing to stop Joyce's pacing.

“Billy I can understand but that's not something Steve would do,” she did have a point.

“Maybe they are at his house-“

His phone started ringing throughout the house. Hopper picked it up without hesitation.

‘This is Hopper,’ his face fell as soon as he heard the voice on the other line, ‘What? Hargrove slow down, what’s wrong?’

Joyce watched Hopper in silent worry. Unknown to her, Jane and Max were watching the whole scene from Jane’s room, in wide eyed curiosity and all.

‘Hawkins Hospital? Are you sure- you don’t know where Steve is?’

Hopper looked more and more worried by the word.

‘Ok, we’ll be there in 30 minutes. Bye,” Hopper hung up the phone immediately, racing to grab his keys and coat. Joyce followed the frantic man around.

“Hopper, what is going on? Why was Billy calling from the hospital?”

“I don’t know, he didn’t say, he told me he and Steve were there, but he hasn’t seen Steve since they got admitted. Besides that, I got nothing,” Joyce felt the deep concern within her rise up. She called

her house without second thought.

“Jonathan? Oh thank God, listen,’ She pleaded, ‘Jonathan, can you please drop off your brother, and possibly pick up Max and Jane? We need to go to the hospital.”

“W-What happened?” Jonathan stuttered on the other line.

“I don’t know sweetie, we’ll give you information when we can, ok?”

“Ok, ok,” Jonathan agreed, sounding just as confused and scared as his mom.

Within record time Joyce, Jane and Max were all gathered in Hoppers car. The man drove as fast as he could to get to the school on time. Max was the first to break the awkward accident.

“W-What’s going on? Why was Billy at the hospital?” Max stuttered, despite how she felt about Billy in the past, knowing that he was in the hospital drove her anxiety levels to the max.

“I don’t know, but if I find out anything major, I’ll call the school and let you right away, ok?”

Max said nothing, she barely mustered a nod.

As soon as both girls were dropped off Hopper and Joyce headed towards the hospital. The cars sirens filled the air as it raced down the road.

“Hargrove, you and Harrington better be ok.”

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“Do you have any patients by the names of Harrington and Hargrove?” was the first question Hopper asked when he and Joyce walked inside the hospital. The nurse at the check in desk looked exhausted and wore out, like she had seen a tragedy up close and personal. An already unusual site, especially in a sleepy town like Hawkins where ‘nothing’ happens.

Now Hopper was extremely suspicious. Whatever happened last night was not a usual event.

“Yes, Hargrove was moved out of ICU last night but can’t say the same thing for Harrington,’ the nurse breathed out, before staring dead on at Hopper, ‘but Chief, the police involved already filled a report on their half-“

“Police involved?”

The nurse looked at Hopper in quiet bewilderment.

“Isn’t that why you’re here? To fill a report on their behalf against the police involved?”

Hopper’s question list was growing by the second.

“What happened last night?”

The nurse motioned for Hopper and Joyce to step closer, further away from any possible prying eyes or ears.

“Well, since they are both technically adults and since you are the Chief, I will give you the run down. Four officers took Harrington and Hargrove here-“

“They were in an accident?” Joyce asked, trying to make sense of what they just heard.

“I wish it was that simple,” the nurse sighed, looking more and more stressed by the situation. At that moment Hopper and Joyce both knew something was usual about this case.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Hopper asked.

“Chief, there is no easy way to say this; the four police officers who took Hargrove and Harrington here were the ones responsible for their injuries.”

Hopper felt his heart stop. The words barely registered in his head.

“W-What?”

“What the hell could they have done to get beaten to the point of hospitalization?”

“I don’t know what happened entirely, but I will tell you what I saw with my own two eyes,’ She took out her notes, handing them over to hopper, who was almost too shocked to accept the files. Hopper’s heartbeat fast as he read the list of injuries both boys received, ‘It was four of them. The so-called ringleader was particularly nasty. I was giving Harrington stitches and he called the poor boy horrible names, to be honest I was happy the poor boy was too concussed to understand him.”

Joyce stepped forward; her motherly instincts were now working overtime.

“What names?”

“Faggot, queer. He especially took pleasure in calling Harrington a 'greaseball' and a 'WOP fag',” Joyce bite her lips hard, her curiosity beat Hopper to the punch.

“WOP?” she asked, now feeling angered beyond belief.

“Without papers, all because the poor boy was speaking Italian,’ the nurse shook her head in disgust, ‘I’ve seen plenty of cops abuse their power. But hearing any vulgar language like that never ceases to disgust me. I feel like I have to wash my mind out with soap.”

Hopper was speechless. It took all his professional compacity and grit to continue on with the conversation.

“What else did you see?” he took out his own note pad to write any details he could get.

“Those cops, if you can even call those goons that,’ she grimaced, ‘Kept egging those boys on as we were giving them treatment. I tell the main goon to step off and you know what he does? He threatened to arrest me for ‘interfering in police investigation’. The nerve of that man. Coming into my workplace acting like he and his goons in company own the place.”

“Where were they from?”

“The Stafford Police Department,” Hopper and Joyce exchanged shocked looks.

“That only 7 miles away,” Joyce whispered. Before the nurse could continue another nurse came up to her whispering something in her ear before walking away. She gave Hopper and Joyce a small side smile.

“Hargrove wants to see you,” she stated, leading both Joyce and Hopper to the direction of Billy’s room.

“Why hasn’t Hargrove seen Harrington?”

The nurse stopped right outside Billy’s room.

“Hopper, it’s not pretty image. We weren’t sure if the poor boy could handle it. He was so upset we had to sedate him. Those damn policemen made a stressful situation ten times harder,” this was already Hopper’s worst nightmare. It was so much easier to face off with civilians then with another cop. Filing a report with the police being involved as the preparators was a workplace political nightmare. Hopper knew it he was facing four cops from a department; he might as well put up a fight with the whole department. Both involved and not involved alike.

“Can we see Hargrove please? I think we have a few reports to file,”

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“Hargrove?”

Hopper and Joyce were both visibly shocked by Billy’s appearance. The black eye, split lip and arm cast were the most apparent. It was odd to see the normally tough blonde be battered and connected to a bunch of IV’s.

“Chief,” Billy greeted back.

Hopper grabbed a chair sitting across from the hospital bed.

“Hargrove, what the hell happened? How did four cops get into a scuffle with you and Harrington?”

Billy’s eyes instantly sparkled in rage, even with his injuries he could still move quickly with all his furious energy, “It wasn’t our fault! Those pigs attacked us! We didn’t do shit!”

“Calm yourself, Hargrove, I’m not accusing you or Harrington of anything. I’m trying to understand what the hell happened. So, tell me what happened?”

Billy breathed out, allowing the worst of his anger to simmer down before speaking.

“It was two in the morning we were almost back home-

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“Ha-ha! That was awesome!”

"I have to admit Metallica is growing on me," Steve smiled, ignoring the cold night air that came into the Camaro. Billy grinned at the admission.

"Yes, I have taken your real music concert virginity," Steve rolled his eyes as the blonde took in more nicotine from his last cigarette.

"Hey Wham! is real music," Steve defended as they rolled into a nearby gas station.

"Hang on, I'm going to get some gas. Then we can get four whole hours of sleep, pretty boy," Billy remarked once they drove the nearest empty pump available. Steve groaned silent, excusing himself from the car after Billy.

"I'm going to grab some cheap coffee," he announced, turning around yelling, "Want anything?"

"Yeah, grab some more fags," Billy demanded, putting out his last cigarette. Delivering playful slap to Steve's ass.

Steve turned around yelling angrily, "*fumi come un dannato camino!*"

"Love you too, pretty boy," unknown to Billy, two cop cars were parked not too far from him. Despite being on the coffee break in the middle of the night, they looked as lively as ever the moment Billy and Steve rolled in. Once they saw Billy was alone, one of the cops approached Billy making it clear he was the leader of the three cops

following behind him.

Billy froze, besides Hopper, he didn't trust cops. All the alarm bells in his head turned on.

'Uh, can I help you?'

The leader of cops glared Billy down despite the two being the same height as the teen.

"Think you can just stroll around like you own the place?" the cop demanded; Billy saw from the corner of his eye the other three cops circle around his car as if they were pack animals planning a strategic attack.

"It's called filling my car with gas, I hardly call that 'owning' the place," another cop from further away answered Billy.

"Don't place stupid with me, faggot. You think we wouldn't catch you?" he sneered. Billy's anxiety was through the roof. It reminded all too much of all the times he and Neil got into it.

Billy put down the gas pump, he was getting pissed, "The fuck did you call me?"

The cop almost seemed to take in joy at Billy's reaction.

“Not important fruitcake, we’ve trying to track you and your partner in crime. Did you really think we wouldn’t recognize you with that Camaro after all the robberies?”

Billy felt in even more danger then before, the realization he and Steve were caught in a serious misunderstanding was not how he wanted to end his concert date. He knew he had to come up with something to save his and Steve’s skins, “I don’t know what confiscated lettuce you have been smoking, but we are not thieves, amigo. We are returning from a concert-“

The main cop pushed himself further into Billy’s personal space.

“Oh, you and that WOP?’ Billy’s eyes widened in rage, ‘He already looks suspicious maybe I should have immigration look at him too. One less problem we would have to deal with.”

Just as Billy was ready to bellow at the sneer faced cop, Steve walked out of the convenient store attached to the gas station. With a bag containing cans of coffee in one hand and a pack of cigarettes in the other.

“Hey Billy, they only had menthols-“

“Get in the car, Harrington,’ Steve looked at Billy, clearly confused, before looking even more surprised at the cops surrounding their car. Billy’s pleas soon turned into demands, ‘Get in the car and don’t leave. That copper there won’t back off.”

Steve nodded his head watching Billy disappear inside the store to pay for the gas. He suddenly he felt small with the blonde at his side. Of all nights for him not to bring his nail bat.

“Hey, you, where have you and blondie been tonight?”

Steve remained silent.

“Oh, the pretty boy doesn’t want to speak,” hearing Billy’s normally casual nickname come out of the angry cop’s mouth made Steve want to run on the spot. He refused to look at any of the cops as he opened the door. Just as he thought he was home free the door was slam shut by one of the cops that stayed silent. He looked like a menace to Steve.

“Hey, he was talking to you, greaseball,’ Steve clinched his fists, that insult always strung hurt in his heart. People always wondered why he cared about his hair so much, this was why. The moment his hair looked even slightly greasy he would drop everything to fix it.

One of the cops decided he no longer wanted to tolerate the silence. He grabbed Steve by the back of hair, ‘Look at him when he is talking to you!’”

Steve struggled to get the tight grip off his scalp, “Don’t touch me!”

“He’s resisting arrest!” one of the cops yelled taking out his baton.

“No, I’m not-“ the hit to the head almost made Steve blackout on the spot. Had it not been for the fights he had against the demodogs, Steve knew he would have blacked out on the spot. He rolled onto his stomach trying to crawl away from the cop, only to be stopped and restrained on the spot. Steve was all but thrashed around by two of the cops.

“Get off of me!” he cried out feeling another hit, this time on his fingers. He could feel them crack under of the weight of the baton.

“AH!” he screamed in pain, this only angered the cops more. A foot pinned Steve the ground as his hands were cuffed behind his back. None of the cops cared about the blood falling from Steve’s forehead or nose.

“Quit resisting!”

Steve heard a familiar pair of feet run towards him.

“Get off him!” Billy demanded, running closer, ‘I said get off of him-AH!”

The crackling sound of taser filled the air. Billy fell onto the ground like sack of flour. His body jerked as another taser shot through his veins.

“Fuck! Fuck!” He thrashed around feeling the white pain burn into his veins.

“Get down on the ground!”

Billy felt someone else grab his arm, twisting it until he felt someone thing snap inside his arm. His body hurt so much all he could do was scream.

“Fuck! GET THE FUCK OFF ME!” He yelled as one of the cops tried to handcuff him, despite his arm being absolutely broken. Billy screamed so hard he would have put any screamo band to shame.

He didn’t even hear the voice yelling in the distance, “Hey man! Stop! Stop! They didn’t do anything!”

Billy Hargrove blacked out on the spot. The last thing he saw was Steve bleeding from the forehead, already unconscious from his injuries.

The thrilling night had taken a horrible turn. And they didn’t even see it coming.

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“Next thing I know I’m waking up in the hospital and those assholes kept demanding to talk to Harrington even though he was out and kept calling us fags, queers and called Harrington WOP over and over again,” Billy finished, his angry never ceased.

Without saying a word hopper left the hospital room, on a mission to find the nearest payphone.

Joyce let a deep breathe before standing up to leave too. She tried giving Billy the best reassuring smile she could give.

“I’ll ask someone to get you to Steve’s room, ok?” Joyce offered, going out to the hallway. This was not how she wanted to start her week.

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It only took three rings for Hopper to reach the police department.

A male voice filled his ear, “Hello, Stafford police department-“

“Hello, this is Chief Jim Hopper from the city of Hawkins, is the Chief of Stafford available?”

“I’m afraid not, Chief. May I please know what is-“

“I am touching in on incident late last night at a gas station seven miles away from Hawkins involving two eighteen year boys who were brought to Hawkins general hospital-“

“Oh, those two, huh?’ Hopper didn’t like the cocky tone at all, his gut already had a bad feeling about this man, ‘Chief, I was one of the police men involved in the attempted arrest last night-“

Hopper hated how correct his instincts were.

“Oh, you were, huh? Then explain to me why you thought it appropriate to call these two kid’s faggots, queers and why you targeted one of them for speaking Italian?” he snarled into the phone. Had he been with this guy in person he would have corned the weasel on the spot.

“No one said anything relating to-“

“Don’t bullshit me, I have an entire medical who disprove your claim,’ Hopper corrected, ‘so answer me this, why did you beat these two? And don’t even think about dancing around details.”

The cop on the other end sighed deeply, as if all this was an inconvenience to him and him alone.

“We had a reported string of a duo car theft pair who used a Camaro to commit both home and store robberies when they weren’t carjacking people. When we saw them at the gas station I asked a few

questions but they decided to attack myself and three other officers-“

“Did you check the license plate?”

“What?”

This told Hopper everything he needed to know.

“Did you check the license plate? Or did you see a big scary Camaro and assume that belonged to the ‘thieves’ because you wanted a criminal to make your damn job easier?” Hopper could hear the officer on the other line shuffle around, no doubt ready to come up with a line of excuses.

“Hopper, we had a job-“

Hopper was officially done beating around the bush.

“Did you tell them why they were being ‘arrested’? Did you even tell them they had the right to be silent? Did you even identify if they were minors or not? Or did you beat them because you get some kind of sick joy out of beating civilians without due cause?” he demanded.

“If those fags hadn’t been so mouthy-“

“Oh, you and the other officers never said anything like that?” Hopper questioned dryly, he heard the officer on the other line all but freeze, Hopper’s suspicion was confirmed, ‘I knew you were full of it but thanks for confirming it, saves me a headache and extra paperwork.”

The angry officer found his voice again, “We had the right to arrest them, Hopper!”

“One of the kids has a concussion!’ Hopper bellowed into the phone, ‘He has a history of concussions, do you understand what type of danger you put him in by doing that to him?’

He was met with silence. Hopper felt the last bit of his patience run dry.

‘I said; DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!’ he roared into the phone not caring about the looks he got from staff. The officer all but choked out an answer.

“Yes, sir,” Hopper knew the type of cop this man was. He was the type who became one because he liked the power and respect behind the badge, but when it came to actually protecting citizens and looking into cases, it was act first, ask questions later. To him it didn’t matter who got hurt along the way.

“Good, then understand this too. I, the two boys and the hospital staff involved in their treatments will be launching former complainants against you and your police department, ” Hopper could feel the panicked look on the snake’s face.

“W-What?”

“For police brutality, failing to follow protocol, use of deadly force and for aggravated assault,” the cop on the other end dropped his phone before being picking it up again a few minutes later.

“Aggravated? We had no intent!”

“Bullshit! You saw two guys you thought were gay and decided to beat them without evidence for your bullshit claims! Goodbye!”

Hopper hung up the phone so loudly his ears were starting to ring. He was angry he couldn't even think of anything else at the moment. He needed those cops to realize that when messed with someone from his town, they were messing with him and the entire Hawkins police department.

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Beep

Beep

Beep

Steve's head was ringing. He couldn't feel much of anything, his whole body was numb to the touch. All except his hand. Using the one good eye he had he turned his head to see a bulk of blonde hair resting on his bed side. His hand was in the tight grip of the tanned hand. Steve squeezed it as hard as he could.

"Hargrove? ... Hargrove?" Steve barely managed to whisper. Billy woke up also instantly. His grip on Steve never ceased.

"Harrington?" Steve smiled the best he could, what he could see of Billy worried him. The arm cast and black eye stuck out the most.

"What happened? Did we get jumped?"

Billy's facial expression immediately became dark.

"I wish," he snarled. Steve knew that look in the blonde's eyes. Billy wanted revenge and he wanted it now.

Before Steve could ask more questions, a knock echoed in the room. Hopper entered the room.

"Harrington," he greeted sitting on the opposite side of Steve's hospital bed. Joyce followed closely behind him, 'Glad to see you're awake. I know you've had a rough night.'

"You could say that," Steve joked, visibly flinching at the pain in his

head. Joyce didn't hesitate to come forward.

"Are you ok, honey? Do you need a nurse or more medication?"

Steve smiled at the concerned woman.

"Na, I can barely feel my toes. I think have enough meds for now," Joyce smiled lightly at the Steve's attempt at humor. Even when he was injured, he still cared about other's wellbeing above his own.

Steve turned to look better at Billy, who, to Steve, looked defeated. Hopper was the first to break the long-gated silence.

"Listen Harrington, this isn't easy to say. But the cops involved in beating you two are currently being investigated for the incident last night,' Hopper explained as briefly as he could, 'Thankfully the gas attend inside the convenient store confirmed Hargrove's story."

Steve looked at Hopper as if he lost his mind, "Cops?"

Hopper felt his stress levels elevating.

"It was a bunch of pigs that beat us up," Billy answered, the rage in his voice didn't go unnoticed by anyone in the room.

"Anyways, the four officers involved have been suspended until the Stafford department can conclude their investigation," Hopper finished.

"What?" Billy seethed, 'You can't be serious."

Hopper knew Billy wouldn't take the news well, "Hargrove-

"No! They're just going back up their asshole buddies, you know 'back the blue', all that good bullshit!?"

"Hargrove-

"They might as well write 'we investigated ourselves and found we did nothing wrong'! How the fuck is that fair?!"

"HARGROVE!" Hopper shouted. Billy stopped on the spot. Even Joyce jumped at the volume of Hopper's voice. Hopper silently cursed before gathering up the patience he needed to speak again, 'Listen, ok? I'm frustrated too! But as Chief it is my job to follow the law and enforce it however I can! I did all I could do! Don't take this out on all of us when we are the ones trying to help your ass!'

Billy bit his lip as he and Hopper continued their stare down.

'I will contact you two when I hear back from the department, ok? For now, all we can do is wait."

No one dared to mutter another word.

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“Paid leave? That’s all you could get?”

This was the outcome was expecting, but not one that he wished to ever happen. The Stafford police department took only three days to conclude they acted within their rights, but as a ‘kind’ gesture’ they decided not press charges against Billy or Steve for ‘resisting’ arrest or against the hospital nurse for ‘interfering’ with a police investigation.

“I’m afraid so,’ Hopper breathed, deciding now was a good time grab a beer from his fridge, ‘They will be on leave for two months, then they will be allowed back on the force. However, they will be lower ranked in their department.”

Billy gave a dry laugh.

“Oh, that’s terrible. The punishment they get for beating some fags is forced paid time off and they have a bit more paperwork than what they got before,” Steve tried to reach for Billy only to have the blonde flinch away from the touch.

“Hargrove, I tried, ok?”

“Yeah, it was so worth the effort,” Billy muttered, leaving the couch to go outside on the footsteps. Joyce and Hopper were about to follow until Steve raised his hand, heading towards the door.

“I’ll talk to him,” he offered, both the adults nodded, Hopper and Joyce knew Steve was the best person to calm Billy down.

Steve approached Billy slowly on the staircase, sitting right besides him. Billy didn’t look at Steve or say a word.

“Billy?”

“Go away,” Billy muttered. His tone of voice caught Steve’s attention. He wasn’t using his usual ‘go away or there will be hell to pay’ type of voice. It was the ‘I believe this is my fault’ voice.

“You have balls,” Steve stated, Billy rolled his eyes. Looking back at the boy with the same matching black eye.

“Kind of hard not to.”

Steve scooted closer, ‘Listen, all joking aside, how you holding up?’

Billy scuffed before laughing darkly at the question.

“Just dandy,’ he stated gesturing to his casted arm, already filled with signatures much like Steve’s, ‘A bunch of assholes in blue can do whatever they want while we get to walk around with arm casts, stitches and bruises. The state might as well given them a big gold star and some beer on top of that.”

“I still really liked that night though,” Steve admitted. Billy looked at Steve, secretly wondering if the brunette’s history of concussions was finally overwhelming him.

“What?”

Steve smiled, holding Billy’s uninjured hand with his own. Billy didn’t fight back.

“Being with you, at Metallica in Indianapolis,’ Steve recalled smiling at memories of roaring crowd and look of absolute joy on Billy’s face at seeing his favorite band right in front of him, ‘It was a pretty bomb night.”

For the first time that week Billy allowed himself to relax, “Yeah? Even though we got some bruises along the way?”

“I don’t know, I get them so often I’m surprised they don’t just hang out longer,” Steve joked. The joke fell on deaf ears for Billy.

“This is all my fault,” Billy declared, not able to look at Steve.

“What?”

“If I had gotten gas earlier that day-“

“Hargrove, you did get gas,’ Steve recalled. Billy froze, it wasn’t until then he realized his memory of that night wasn’t as good as he remembered, ‘Remember a full tank?’

Billy stared dumbly at Steve. Steve squeezed Billy’s hand tighter.

“This would have happened regardless,” Steve reinforced. This did nothing to shake Billy’s inner guilt.

“But I still-“

“Would have run into the same assholes,” Steve re-affirmed, scooting closer to the blonde to where they were touching thighs.

“Yeah,” for the next few minutes neither said anything. From that day forward they silently agreed not to, under any circumstances, give hints or even small gestures that they were together. The cruelty was too much. It was all too much.

Author's Note:

TRUE STORY

On January of 1982 in Minneapolis, two men, Rick Hunter and John Hanson, were beaten by police officers after two men outside a gay bar had been reported for threatening and taunting Hunter and Hanson.

It was later reported the cops involved had choked and punched them and had been calling the two men 'faggots' even while they were being treated for their injuries at the hospital.

All charges against Hunter and Hanson were eventually dropped. It was one of the few times the jury didn't buy the police's version of the story.

Please, please, PLEASE, if you ever see something wrong, regardless of what type of hate crime it is (including race, sexual orientation, gender, etc) please do not stay silent!

Additional story notes:

- the slurs WOP (working without papers) and greaseball are racial slurs commonly directed those who are Italian or of Italian heritage, however they have also been used against other groups such as those of Mediterranean or Latin American origin.

- The town 'Stafford' is reference to the fictional town name used in "The Fugitive" (1963)

- "fumi come un dannato camino!" translates to "you smoke like a damn chimney!"